

Mr. and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant

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Ulysses G. Grant is very well known for his military campaigns and achievements during the Civil War. However, there is a softer, more personal side to General Grant's life. This can be seen in his relationships with Julia Dent, whom he met while attending West Point. In 1848, he married Julia Dent. Their relationship was challenging at times due to Grant's Military career. Although Grant was frequently away from Julia, they remained close throughout their lives.

Frederick Dent, Julia's brother, was a classmate of Grant at West Point, where they both attended college. After meeting Julia at a social event held at her home, they fell in love almost instantaneously. When Grant returned to West Point, they were both very lonely. Only a few months later, Julia agreed to wear Grant's West Point College ring. The couple became engaged in 1844. Julia's father was against their courtship. He adamantly argued that Grant did not have enough money to support his beloved daughter. Finally, on August 22, 1848, Julia and Grant were wed in the Dent city home. Julia was joyous and radiant on her wedding day. Attendants at the wedding bragged on how beautiful the wedding itself was, as well as the couple in it. The Grants were in love and seemed well suited for married life. However, Grant's military career would keep them apart much of their marriage.

Less than three months after they were married, Grant left to report to Michigan. This was the very first test of their marriage, as well as the beginning of Grant's absences throughout their relationship. On May 30, 1850, Julia gave birth to their first child, Frederick Dent Grant. Grant returned for the birth, but spent less than a year at home with Julia before he left again. While Grant was away from Julia, they spent a great deal of their time writing to each other. In one letter from Julia to Ulysses, she writes about what had been going on back home. She acknowledged daily activities, such as buying things from the market and her happiness when she received one of his letters. Julia also informed Grant about current events back home. She told him that Mrs. Rowley had died around July 3, 1883, and about the well being of the family. Julia also received many letters from Grant telling her where he had been and where he was presently located. Grant hoped to provide Julia with a sense of sharing his life. However, all of his letters were not happy. Sometimes Grant told tell her stories of various battles. Grant wrote, "These terrible battles are very good things to read about for persons who loose no friends." In February, 1862, Ulysses told Julia that he was ". . . decidedly in favor of having as little of it as possible" speaking of war, yet the only "way to avoid it is to push forward as vigorously as possible. Grant asked about his family in every letter and told Julia to have them write as frequently as possible. A letter sent to Julia in March, 1862 tells how her sick he had been in the past few days, and concluded with "Give my love

to all at home. Kiss the children for me. – Ulys.” By writing letters to each other, Ulysses and Julia were able to write the story of their lives, which happened to be without one another. They shared issues they were facing, things they would have known if they were together, and the love they felt for one another. Personal touches are added to the end of each letter, whether it asks Julia to kiss the kids for Ulysses, or tells Ulysses to hang in there because they would be together again soon.

The Grants were able to maintain a strong relationship even while Ulysses was away at war. This is shown through the letters that the two shared throughout time at war. Also, the family that the Grants shared held their feelings and connection tightly together. The family bonds are obviously tight, as shown in the letters from Grant. He told Julia to kiss the children goodnight and to give them his best on multiple occasions. [From American Experience, *Timeline: Ulysses S. Grant 1822-1861*. www.bps.org/wgbh/amex/grant/timeline/index.html. (Oct. 5, 2004); Julia Dent Grant, et al. *The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant (Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant)*; Julia Dent Grant. www.clinton3.nara.gov/WH/glimpse/firstladies/html/jg18.html. (Nov 4, 2004); Diane Meives, *Little Known Facts about Ulysses S. Grant*, www.css.edu.mkelse/facts.html. (Oct. 5, 2004); Ishabel Ross *The General's Wife: the Live of Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant*; William R. Rowley *Papers 1862-1892*. (Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library); Stewart Sifakis and William Rowley. *Who Was Who In The Civil War*. Civilwarhome.com. www.civilwarhome.com/grantbio.htm. (Oct. 5, 2004).]